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ABSTRACT

Concerned with the conflicting goals, purposes, and roles that characterize schools, this paper examines the relationships among educators, the wider educational community, and society in general as these relationships affect schools' organizational functioning. The focus is a theoretical model that attempts to explain how the microbehaviors of individuals and small groups produce the macrolevel structures and functions representing schooling as an institution. The theoretical problem is how to depict a model that: (1) accounts for individual acts, decisions, and practices while accommodating schooling to societal changes; and (2) adequately captures the tensions underlying all of social life. The paper is organized into four parts. The first discusses the dynamic tensions inherent in the wider society. The second part describes the work of M. B. Miles (1981) on mapping the common properties of schools in terms of the nine organizational dilemmas common to all schools. Part 3, accompanied by several figures, extends Miles' analysis of these dilemmas to include a decision band theory of school effectiveness. The final part discusses the model's implications for numerous issues, including environmental change, methodological issues relevant to empirical testing, and educational utility. (26 references) (MLH)

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THE DILEMMAS OF SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS: BALANCING THE TENSIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL LIFE[1]

by

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Paper Presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, Chicago

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[1]Paper has been re-titled; the AERA presentation was "Dilemmas, Decision Bands, and Environmental Change: A Dynamic Theory of Organizational and School Effectiveness."

THE DILEMMAS OF SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS:
BALANCING THE TENSIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL LIFE

It is no accident that educational organizations "feel" like schools. All schools operate under certain constraints and are required to perform certain functions (socialization and instruction) with a particular clientele (children and youth) who are compelled to attend. Such facts are self-evident. So, too, are the governance systems based on local community control and the multiple publics that schools endeavor to accommodate. But what is not always so evident are the conflicting goals and purposes, organizational tensions, and role strains that school personnel experience in trying to balance the forces that pull the school in different directions.

This paper examines the relationships among educators, the wider educational community, and society generally as they affect the organizational functioning of schools. The focus is a theoretical model that attempts to explain how the micro-behavior of individuals and small groups produce the macro level structures and functions that represent schooling as an institution. The theoretical problem is two-fold: (1) how to represent a model that simultaneously accounts for individual acts, decisions, and practices on the one hand and the long term accommodation of schooling to changes in the wider society on the other, and (2) how to depict a model that adequately captures the dynamic tensions that underlie all of social life, i.e., the balancing of the competing goals, goods, and alternatives that

comprise all human behavior, both individually at the level of daily routines and collectively for the many groups and organizations that make up society.

The paper, then, is explicitly theoretical. The framework presents an explanation for the dynamic nature that characterizes schooling, professional practice, and student behavior--typifying the inherent tensions of everyday organizational life. In this sense even relatively stable schools experience conflicts, and the accommodation to these strains is ever subject to renegotiation. The theoretical approach addresses the need to understand all of social and organizational behavior in terms of the ubiquitous accommodation to conflicting demands, i.e., theoretical stasis is inconsistent with the empirical reality of everyday tensions. With respect to "effectiveness," the theory incorporates changing societal views of "good schools" (Miller, 1990) as different goals and interests are given differential emphasis over time.

The paper is organized into four parts. In the first section a general discussion of the dynamic tensions inherent in the wider society is presented. Part two describes the work of Miles (1981) on mapping the common properties of schools in terms of the nine organizational dilemmas that are common to all schools. In section three, Miles' analysis of these common dilemmas is extended in the form of a decision band theory of school effectiveness. A series of figures illustrate how the theory addresses the issues noted above. In the final part, the

implications of the model are raised for a number of issues including environmental change, methodological issues relevant to empirical testing, and educational utility.

The development of an organizational theory that truly "models" the behavior and collective actions of educators is a daunting task. But if we wish to understand better why some schools are effective when most are not and how better to address the problem of school improvement, then it is essential to look at the strains that schools and practitioners experience. As a colleague* is fond of saying, "People do things for reasons." This paper is intended to help make those reasons more clear.

The Constraints of Social Life

All organizational behavior occurs within certain bounded limits. Individual actors bring to a given position their own particular idiosyncratic perceptions of how that role should be played. But each individual's actions, and even the range of his/her ideas about the possibilities for action, are constrained by the realities of the organization's purpose and structure and by the temporal and cultural structure of the wider society. More simply, knights in King Arthur's time, and we today, are limited in our thoughts and deeds to the possibilities of feudal agriculture and the post-industrial information age,

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respectively. More narrowly, lawyers, teachers, and meat cutters perceive and are permitted differing latitudes for action and interrelationships during the routines of daily activity within their respective organizations.

This is not a trivial point. In the United States, with our heritage of the rugged individualist (frontier pioneers and entrepreneurs), our celebration of the self-made man (Horatio Alger rags to riches stories, the more modern version being "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous"), and the American Dream (the meritocratic ideology of social mobility through hard work, ability, and success in school), we are prone to exaggerate the extent to which the individual has control over his/her success. Simultaneously, we underestimate the effects of structural restraints and societal forces that shape our thoughts and limit our options at an unaware, taken-for-granted level (cf. Mills, 1959). Even such highly personal decisions as dating and marriage have been influenced in ways that we seldom acknowledge, not the least being simple propinquity and timing.

We can visualize the extent to which organizational structure limits our possibilities for action by conducting what Sarason (1971) calls a thought experiment. Imagine all of the possible range of actions for all different activities that have ever existed for human beings, from prehistoric hunting and gathering tribes to modern electronic age gadgetry, across all different cultures, both current and extinct. Then consider the proportion of that range of alternatives that are actually

feasible for today's urban American who sets out to do the weekly grocery shopping at the local supermarket. Even more to the point, out of all of the different ideas across all topics and throughout history, what percentage does the typical American consider while grocery shopping? Or going through the motions of an entire day, for that matter? Quite obviously, we are more constrained by history, society, and organizational structure than we like to admit.

The Social System of the School

This emphasis on the effects of organizational structure is not without reason. The behavior of educational personnel occurs within fairly narrow decision bands[2] that are primarily determined by the unique structure and purpose of the school social system. I stress this for two reasons. First, we need to recognize the forces that impinge on teachers and administrators. While these structural constraints permit a certain amount of role variation, "teacher" and "principal" behaviors may clearly be seen in the day-to-day activities of teachers and principals across the country. What are these constraints? What are the common responses to the organizational forces that define teacher or principal behavior? Do the typical responses to these forces

[2]Decision bands can be thought of as the range of behavior options open to an actor in a given organizational setting. Both psychological and organizational factors affect the degree of latitude for any action. Decision bands exist for different dimensions of organizational behavior and typically represent a choice between forces that must be balanced. Any given decision band (e.g., the degree of emphasis on instruction versus control of students) represents the composite set of choices made by the individuals in that organization (or across similar organizations).

differ in schools that are more effective? If so, are the differing responses of educators in more effective schools because of a higher quality "personal response" to similar constraints? Or because of a different culture and organizational structure that encourages a different ("better") response in the effective school than that from the same person in a typical or ineffective school? Or both? Answers to these questions should help us understand how school improvement strategies can be structured for the greatest chance of success.

Second, the decision bands have relevance to teacher professionalism. There has been implicit in much of the school reform movement an assumption that what is "bad" about schools is the teachers. Teachers are not bright enough, are resistant to change, represent the "establishment," are heavily invested in the status quo, are not professional, and so forth. Occasionally, this "teacher bashing" may take a positive turn, in a backhanded way (e.g., teachers ought to be paid more, because the current paltry salaries will not attract more talented individuals).

I reject this line of thought. The implicit thinking of these and similar arguments is psychological at its core: individuals think and act the way they do because of psychological traits such as ability, personality, and moral fiber; if we want better performance, we have to recruit "better" individuals. While certain structural inducements such as salary, security, costs and length of professional training, and

perceived working conditions do affect the supply and demand of individuals in the talent pool who opt for one profession or another (cf. Lortie, 1975), this view simplistically assumes that once the talent pool is distributed, performance in the various professions has already been determined. This psychological perspective neglects the influence of working conditions, motivation, reward structures--both incentives and disincentives--and other contextual factors that contribute to the level of performance among professionals. Thus, the reform movement's focus on individual teacher ability would seem to discount the strong evidence for school to school differences in professional attitudes and beliefs as reflected in the learning climate or ethos (see Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer, & Wisenbaker, 1979; Rutter, Maugham, Mortimore, Ouston, & Smith, 1979) and the possibilities for professional growth and cooperation (cf. Little, 1982; Rosenholtz, 1985).

Rather, teachers and principals in today's schools behave in ways consistent with the existing decision bands that are defined by the structure of schooling. If this behavior is not consistent with what policymakers believe is optimal, we need to examine the working conditions that educational professionals respond to, rather than assuming that there is something "wrong" with the vast majority of the individuals who behave that way. These competing positions have decidedly different ramifications for the improvement of education: from a purely psychological perspective many of the individuals currently teaching must be

"written off" because of low ability; alternatively, those same individuals can be expected to improve significantly if contextual conditions are the major determinant of behavior, and if conditions more conducive to improved professional practice are created.

Bureaucratic Structure of the School

Thinking about schools as organizations mirrors, in many respects, the progress of organizational theory generally, i.e., from a bureaucratic, formal organizational model to a systems perspective of organizational dependence and interaction with its environment. In this contingency or open systems model (cf. Perrow, 1979; Scott, 1981) organizations adapt to and try to influence their environment; behaviors and organizational structures that evolve represent efforts of the organization's leaders and workers to shape the organization to their own ends and ensure survival in a competitive environs. The accommodations that take place--between management and workers, internal goals and external forces, formal regulations and informal procedures--include both conscious and unconscious adjustments to the pressures experienced by the individual actors. These pressures differ, depending on the type and purpose of the organization, position in the authority structure, and changes over time.

Current thinking on schools has been strongly influenced by a conception of schools as loosely-coupled organizations (Weick, 1976). While the insights from this model are considerable, it

is important to remember that schools in America reflect the underlying realities of their quasi-bureaucratic organization. The source of much of the existing role strain experienced in schools can be found in the efforts of principals and teachers to balance contradictory forces stemming from that bureaucratic nature. Bidwell's (1965) classic piece on the school as a social system provides a basic primer for later work on role strain. In framing his analysis, Bidwell makes explicit three fundamental assumptions about the organizational character of schools. The inherent tensions and unique feel of all schools stem from these basic considerations.

First, schools are primarily designated as service oriented, client serving organizations of the state, vested with a specific mission: the socialization and preparation of children for adult life. Second, there is a fundamental dichotomy between adult and student roles. Pupils are compelled to attend and have little or no choice (within the public school sector) about selecting a school. Furthermore, the students are confronted with learning both a curriculum and a type of demeanor over which they have had no choice and which is specifically designed to counter the natural playfulness and social tendencies of young people. Adults, however, have freely chosen to work in education and are purportedly chosen on the basis of their expertise. But teachers are charged with the responsibility for control and instruction of the captive audience of students. This sets the stage for conflict between student and teacher. Third, school systems are

based on a legal, bureaucratic charter; as such the structure of schools is consistent at least in form with Weber's (1947) formal and rational organizations. Thus, the student-teacher conflict is set within a nominally bureaucratic institution.

According to Bidwell (1965) schools are organized to provide rationality and control in the socialization of large numbers of children who are highly variable in their personal attributes. Thus, schools display the following characteristics of bureaucracies:

> 1. a functional division of labor (e.g., the allocation of instructional and coordinative tasks to the school-system roles of teacher and administrator);
>
> 2. the definition of staff roles as offices, that is, in terms of recruitment according to merit and competence, legally based tenure, functional specificity of performance, and universalistic, affectively neutral interaction with clients;
>
> 3. the hierarchic ordering of offices, providing an authority structure based on the legally defined and circumscribed power of officers, a system of adjudication of staff disputes by reference to superiors, and regularized lines of communication;
>
> 4. operation according to rules of procedure, which set limits to the discretionary performance of officers by specifying both the aims and modes of official action. (Bidwell, 1965, p. 974)

But pressures and strains within the school result in behavior that is not consistent with the bureaucratic model. Wide variations in the raw product (student aptitudes, interests, motivations and backgrounds) and a vague, unclearly defined production technology (in terms of knowledge and procedures related to effective teaching) result in uncertainties with respect to student learning outcomes. Weick's (1976, 1982)

theory suggests that the more uncertain the outcomes and the more vague and poorly understood the core production function, the more a given organization will depart from classic bureaucratic functioning and exhibit loose coupling.

Bidwell's analysis further examines the assumption that rationality is required for the smooth running of schools. First, as indicated, any grouping or cohort of students contains wide variation in aptitude, motivation, readiness, aspirations, and family support. Yet, schools are responsible for a certain uniformity in quality of preparation for adulthood. As a result, there is strong pressure on the schools to apply universalistic principles of selection to the cohort of students in order to reduce variability. Since schools function not only to prepare students for adult roles but also to select different pupils for different levels in the stratified economic hierarchy of the wider society, the selection procedures work to separate students and to provide them with differing experiences suited to their individual aptitudes and presumed divergent destinies.

Second, the pressure to reduce variability comes from within schools as well. Teachers are charged not only with responsibility for students' attainment of certain instructional and work related skills, but also with the immediate and long term social acceptability of their behavior. The problems inherent in social control are compounded by the large numbers involved, the required attendance, the variability in deportment, the length of time involved (up to age 16), and the competing

demands of student interests. Quite apart from any selection based on academic or aptitude related performance, students are met with universalistic, rule-based sets of expectations for behavior that often conflicts with and is frequently the first departure from the affective, particularistic, and accepting mode of response to their behavior in the home.

This uniquely educational context shapes the organizational structure within which teachers and administrators experience role strain. Several persisting problems in schools can be examined within this context: the conflict between students and teachers, the tensions between teachers and administrators, the continuing emphasis on behavioral conformity in the dynamic between control and instruction, and the dilemma of the principal as manager versus instructional leader.

Common Properties and Dilemmas

Miles (1981), in a brilliant analysis of the underlying tensions of schools, and the dilemmas that these strains produce, suggests that schools in America share certain common properties. In the explanation of these common properties that follows, I draw heavily on this work. Miles notes several examples of these common properties that various researchers have identified, as adapted from Fullan, Miles, and Taylor (1978).

Goal diffuseness: Vague and conflicting goals, frequently difficult to measure.

Sub-optimal technical capability: Uncertainties over the existence of a knowledge base of accepted practice on how to accomplish the core instructional tasks of education.

> Coordination problems: Schools are loosely coupled organizations in which goals, outcomes, and subunits are not closely connected; autonomy is not coupled with accountability.
>
> Boundary management problems: Both insiders and outsiders perceive organization-environment relations as troubled, but from vastly differing perspectives as to what (and why) the problem is.
>
> Domestication: Local control of schools plus compulsory attendance results in a non-competitive situation in which clients are guaranteed and incentives for change are weak.
>
> Location in a constrained, decentralized supra system: Despite local control of schools, forces such as textbook markets, state and federal regulations, and university requirements/certification standards impose structural constraints at the national level. (Miles, 1981, pp. 42-43)

While these are not exhaustive, they do illustrate several aspects of common properties. Miles (1981) suggests that such elements are standard across schools, remain relatively stable, and represent core ideas and conditions regarding the essence of schools. The effect of these common properties in shaping the behavior of the participants in school life is crucial, defining the underlying "deep structure" to which daily routines and rhythms must accommodate (Miles, 1981, p. 43). Furthermore, the structures that arise in response to these common features play a critical role in efforts to bring about or thwart change (cf. Kaufman, 1975). It is unlikely that professionals will alter behavior that has been adapted over time to certain structural conditions unless these structures are themselves first altered.

Finally, lest I be accused of negating entirely individual initiative and expertise, these common properties do not totally determine behavior. Rather, they provide a framework for a

variable range of permissible individual action. Key reasons for studying such structures are to determine what are the expected ranges of professional behavior and what is the modal or typical behavioral response of practitioners who work within the constraints of organizations with these properties.

Primary Tasks of Schools.

Common properties are not directly observable entities as such but can be recognized as the patterned institutional responses and regularities that derive from individual reactions to these core educational features. The common properties of schools can be thought of as two types: inherent or intrinsic, and historical (Miles, 1981). The former have to do with the nature of schooling, such as the problems involved in socializing children to adult status. The latter represent legislative acts or social movements (e.g., local control and funding, or the development of IQ testing as the basis of allocating students to ability groups and tracks, respectively).

By themselves, the common properties of schools do not fully determine the limits of professional behavior in a given school. All educational systems exhibit two other basic organizational givens: (1) primary tasks of organizational survival, and (2) local contextual variation due to the unique characteristics of individuals, community makeup, tradition, or funding levels. The latter is self-explanatory. The former represents a series of functions that all organizations must manage in order to survive. Miles (1981, p. 55) lists seven of these functions that are

relevant to educational systems: (1) core task accomplishment (instructional services), (2) integration (linkages among sub-units), (3) relation with immediate environment (interactions with local community), (4) relation with distal environment (dealings with governmental units, universities, textbook markets, and other such bodies), (5) goal setting (determining direction and priorities), (6) management (coordinating personnel and services), and (7) adaptation (long and short term adjustment to changes in the environment).

It is the interaction of these three aspects of the social system--common properties, primary organizational tasks, and local variations--that determine the behavioral response of those engaged in schooling. As Miles (1981, p. 54) notes:

> Schools as social systems have certain primary tasks. . . . The demands of these tasks, along with the inherently and historically derived properties of schools in this particular culture, lead to certain observed regularities and some dilemmas. . . . Each local district, building, and classroom also has many variable properties stemming from the uniqueness of local conditions. . . . These local conditions, in concert with the regularities and dilemmas seen as common properties, generate operational and change-relevant behavior (by teachers, administrators, boards, change agents) which can be seen as patterned resolutions of dilemmas. (Emphasis in original)

The notion of dilemma is crucial to understanding the dynamic nature of schools. By "dynamic" I do not mean that schools are necessarily in a constant state of flux. Indeed, many observers have noted the conservative bias and resistance to change that are characteristic of schools. Rather, the term "dynamic" here refers to the underlying tensions that role occupants experience as they try to satisfy multiple and often

conflicting goals. Even in schools that are relatively stable and that have developed basically static programs and operational routines, staff and students may be caught in role conflicts that cannot be resolved without a certain amount of strain.

The problem for the individual is that there is no good solution to these pressures. Following Miles, a dilemma presents a choice between two goods (or two evils) which are mutually exclusive, i.e., cannot be resolved without sacrificing (capitulating to) one or the other. Thus, even if a student has chosen acceptance in a social clique over the academic effort necessary to earn entrance to a good university, the long term pursuit of education and career continue to exert a pull toward the other good. Not even an unchanging decision to stay in the clique will remove the inherent "goodness" of the other alternative, although it is likely that the individual may well experience attitudinal changes which denigrate the value of college or career; thus persons may take on the values and behaviors of the good that has been chosen, as in cognitive consistency theory generally (Zajonc, 1960) and cognitive dissonance theory specifically (Aronson, 1968; Festinger, 1957). Furthermore, neither an explicit awareness of the choice nor, as is probably more often the case, a felt response to intuitive feelings reduces the tension that is inherent between the two forces.

If the concept of dilemma is carried from the individual to the organizational level, the work on the common properties of

schools adds additional insight. Miles (1981) lists nine dilemmas that stem from the interaction of schools' common properties, organizational tasks, and local conditions.

Internal:

(1) Core task focus versus "survival" emphasis.
(2) Diversity versus uniformity.
(3) Coordination versus flexibility.
(4) Environmental dependence versus autonomy.
(5) Environmental contact versus withdrawal.
(6) Environmental expertise seeking versus self-reliance.

Management of internal-external functioning:

(7) Feedback seeking versus intuitive/routine action.
(8) Centralized versus shared influence.
(9) Change versus stability. (p. 57)

Taken together, the nine dilemmas represent the operational decision bands for conflicting goals within which the occupants of a school must choose a course of action. This course of action represents the behaviorally defined set of daily routines and activities that answer the question, for any given school, "How do we resolve the various choices of competing goods?"

Rarely, however, are the choices involved in resolving these nine dilemmas so clearly labeled. The participants in schools are caught up in the immediacy of action, deadlines, rules and regulations, enforcement procedures, responsibility for large numbers of non-adults, and all the other realities that consume the attention of staff and students alike. It has oft been remarked that schools, ironically since they exist to educate, are <u>not</u> reflective places. Very simply, schools do not encourage reflection because the crush of responsibilities requires attention to the smooth functioning of the building in the

immediate present. Thus Miles (1981) observes that the resolution of organizational dilemmas is seldom a conscious decision but rather one that "just happens" as time pressures, crisis management, competing goals, more and less powerful interest groups all exert their influence on the organization. Somehow schools must balance these real and perceived forces while ensuring organizational survival. In other words, the primary tasks have to get done in some form, no matter what the pressures.

Furthermore, the operating behavioral patterns may not represent any "choice" in terms of viable options. Certain behaviors may be so constrained by organizational structures, societal factors, and local conditions that any other "choice" is not realistic. The existing pattern can only be seen as a choice if viewed in the larger (or longer) sense of comparison to schooling in other societies or at other times when conditions were so different that alternate responses developed as a meaningful resolution of these organizational and societal stresses. As noted above, however, conscious awareness of such an inclusive set of "options" is not a normal aspect of human functioning.

Decision Band Theory

As acknowledged, Miles' (1981) organizational treatise on the common institutional patterns and organizational dilemmas of schooling is the primary intellectual antecedent of this paper. Here Miles' work is extended to produce a theoretical framework

for examining the patterned variation of different types of schools across the nine dilemmas. That is, why do contextual variables, grade levels, governance, and other relevant factors seemingly result in similar "school-like" responses when an almost unlimited number of different school profiles across the nine dilemmas are possible. More specifically, how can the seemingly anomalous response of effective and ineffective schools be explained, especially when these atypical responses are evidently patterned rather than random? (Here the relevant observation, that effective schools demonstrate common characteristics that seem to be responsible for the "effective" outcomes, must be explained.)

The theoretical problem is compounded by the fact that conflicting societal pressures occur across all of the dilemmas. Each of the nine sets of opposing values defines the limits of behavior for its own decision band. Although there is some overlapping between dilemmas, each is somewhat independent of the strains inherent in the remaining dilemmas. Thus, a school evolves a behavioral repertoire that represents an unconscious adjustment to common properties, local conditions, basic organizational survival, and role strain across all nine dilemmas. Figure 1 depicts a theoretical format that incorporates the notion of decision bands across the dilemmas. (The placement of empirical limits and modal response regions in this and all subsequent figures is conjectural. No empirical data exists to corroborate these decision bands at this time.)

Insert Figure 1 about here

With this framework we have an explanation for the sameness of education while simultaneously accounting for individual variations from school to school. As Goodlad (1984, p. 264) notes, "Schools differ; schooling is everywhere very much the same" (emphasis in original). All schools must operate within a cultural context of common educational properties, both inherent and historical, and must satisfy certain minimal functions in order to continue as an organization: hence the sameness. But varying local conditions and the idiosyncratic response of the staff and students guarantee that no two schools will resolve the organizational tensions of all nine dilemmas in precisely the same way: hence the variability.

Insert Figure 2 about here

But this combination of sameness and variability can be deceiving. I would be remiss in giving the impression that different schools have evolved widely differing overall patterns to the forces described above. The decision bands for the various dilemmas represent the limits of possible action for a given strain. Figure 2 illustrates the effects of the structures of the wider society, consistent with how the community perceives this constellation of forces. Thus, the power of the common properties (e.g., local taxes or the stratification of schooling

by grouping or tracking) is such that most schools will resolve a particular tension inside a fairly narrow region located within the wider empirical limits of the decision band.

Accordingly, we find that most low income schools look like other low income schools; affluent schools are remarkably alike; private schools, responding to somewhat different societal and political pressures, take on characteristics that distinguish them from public schools; and secondary schools differ from elementary schools. Figure 3 represents comparative effects for different types of governance on Dilemma 5; Figure 4, different grade levels on Dilemma 2; and Figure 5, different economic conditions on Dilemma 4--all based on theoretical conjecture.

Insert Figures 3, 4, and 5 about here

At the same time, the potential for variation does exist. The actual limits of permissible action within the decision band surrounding a given tension, while not unlimited, are far greater than the typical response of schools. Thus, we can describe a modal or typical response, i.e., a common patterned accommodation to the tensions that schools experience, that represents a blueprint or a map of schools generally and of the behavioral activities of individuals in the schools. For example, one of the most fundamental of all regularities in schools is the powerful association between the social class and racial makeup of the student body and the average achievement level: low achievement for lower socioeconomic status (SES), higher minority

enrollment and higher achievement for more affluent, primarily white schools.

The modal pattern, however, is not inevitable. The range of limits permits school personnel to evolve behavioral regularities that are not typical. The entire literature on school effectiveness (see Levine & Lezotte, 1990) represents the study of schools in which practitioners, often led by a dynamic, instructionally oriented principal, have established behavioral patterns that are different from that of "typical" schools, resulting in outcomes for students that are substantially higher than expected. The high achieving, low income effective school is the quintessential example of a faculty that have created activities, routines, and beliefs that transcend the modal school response to societal structures and forces. Negative outliers also exist, again representing an accommodation to the received environmental pressures that falls outside the modal range, only now in a pattern that results in reduced effectiveness.

Implications of the Theory

The reader should not get the idea that the non-typical response of outliers, those few schools who fall outside the modal response for a dilemma, is easy or commonplace; if such variability were more common, the notion of common properties would not be such a powerful explanation, and effective schools would be much more prevalent. Furthermore, although discussion of the various possibilities for how schools could resolve these dilemmas is purely speculative, it would seem unlikely that any

given school would fall outside the modal response range on all nine continuums. Empirical data from studies at both the organizational level and individual level generally confirm this: individual school response to surveys of climate or school effectiveness produce a range of higher and lower scores on the different scales in the instrument; individual psychological tests of personality or intelligence also produce a profile of higher and lower scores on the different sub-tests.

Perhaps a better sense of the pressure exerted on school personnel by societal forces can be obtained by examining change over time. The tensions inherent in social life undergo continual renegotiation of the conflicting pressures in different areas of society. Thus constitutional legal principles are reinterpreted as new cases reach the Supreme Court, moral standards and beliefs are redefined as new technologies produce changes in behavior, and the liberal-conservative political mood of the country is re-tallied at each election. The same is true for the nine dilemmas that define the basic organizational tensions of schools.

Change occurs both in the short term in response to the day to day exigencies of schools and over longer periods of time as economic, technological, political, and social forces gradually alter the mix of pressures that constitute the wider environment. Because these pressures change, educators respond by re-balancing the tensions in the different dilemmas, consistent with their changed perceptions of the relative strength and importance of

the two opposing goods for any given continuum. This redress of opposing forces can be either sudden or gradual, explicit or unnoticed.

Insert Figure 6 about here

Figure 6 represents a situation in which a school changed its focus and purpose suddenly and dramatically in response to a community tragedy, the Carrolton, Kentucky, accident in which more than 20 youth died when a drunken driver going in the wrong direction on the interstate collided with a school bus returning from a church outing.[3] While the actual empirical ranges noted for Dilemma 1, Core Task Focus versus Survival Emphasis, are hypothetical, they are consistent with what was reported for the high school which many of these young persons attended.

Insert Figure 7 about here

Most change in schools is not this noticeable. But as the wider environment changes, schools gradually change to reflect these shifts. Figure 7 suggests an interpretation for the educational reform movements of the last couple of decades. The horns of Dilemma 9 are Change and Stability. While schools are generally considered to be stable and fairly resistant to change, the pace of reforms and the unquestionably fundamental issues

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[3]I acknowledge the insight of Lou Spencer, doctoral student at the University of Louisville, for this example.

being addressed over the last 20 years suggest a quickening of change, a readjustment of educators' perceptions of the need for change over stasis, a re-balancing of the relative importance of adaptation over stability. While the analyses of the current reform movement are many and varied, a simple explanation is the adjustment of schools to the changing educational needs of the emerging post-industrial, electronic information age. Just as the industrial model of production is being displaced, so too are the schools, developed to produce workers for the industrial age, being redesigned. Consequently, change in schools accelerates.

Empirical Issues Regarding the Theory

Theories perform a number of functions in scientific thought, and, although there is not space here for an incursion into the philosophy of the social sciences (see, e.g., Reynolds, 1971), I would be remiss if I did not raise some empirical issues related to the theory. Ultimately, a theory has not only to help organize and explain but also to "model" or predict the data. In other words, the theory needs to represent social reality so that the theory is consistent with what people actually do in organizational contexts. Accordingly, several empirical issues are briefly noted (these are representative, not exhaustive). A fuller discussion of these must be deferred until empirical tests of the theory can be conducted.

The first and most basic question is whether outcomes are associated with the dilemmas. Obviously, schools have both dilemmas and outcomes, but this question refers to the patterned

resolution of the dilemmas. Are specific changes in outcomes associated with different patterns of resolving the dilemmas? If it turns out to be the case that patterns of dilemma resolution are only randomly related to school outcomes, then the theory's utility for school improvement would be marginal at best. This circumstance would leave the theory as a conceptual tool for describing and explaining the tensions that exist in schools; such a model would be useful for helping educators make explicit and informed choices as they balance the values and goods of society. That is not a trivial accomplishment, but in a results oriented society, the lack of potential for outcomes improvement would detract seriously from the theory's value.

A second issue, assuming that some patterns of dilemma resolution are more efficacious for certain outcomes than others, is the identification and verification of these different patterns. This raises a number of related issues. Is the key factor the overall pattern of the nine dilemmas or do specific dilemmas represent pressure points that yield different outcomes. Is it possible to re-balance only one or two "key" dilemmas without changing the overall mix or are the dilemmas so intertwined that to change one is to change all?

The third issue concerns tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1967). If Miles (1981) is correct that the resolution of dilemmas "just happens" then they would seem to be an example of tacit knowledge in operation, i.e., the "knowing" is at a taken-for-granted, unconscious level of operation, guiding behavior without

resorting to explicit reflection. What happens, however, if a measurement instrument asks educators to show how they balance the nine dilemmas on a continuum, perhaps with a metric of 9 equidistant points, with "9" and "1" representing the ends of the continuum? Can a respondent indicate a "3" in response to a given tension without explicitly thinking about that which has heretofore operated at the implicit level? Can we accurately measure implicit subjective behavior with an explicit subjective response? And what happens to the person's organizational behavior after responding to an instrument that demands explicit awareness of his/her (previously tacit) behavior?

Fourth, and clearly related to the issue of tacit knowledge, is the problem of social desirability. Is it possible to describe the poles of the nine dilemmas in a manner that communicates clearly to practitioners who "live" the vissicitudes of schools on a daily basis yet are not versed in organization theory? And, assuming clarity of communication, is it possible to describe the opposing goods or values of the nine dilemmas in a non-biased manner, so that the reader or respondent gets the sense that the opposite poles are truly the "horns" of the dilemma: both valued, both necessary, both useful. At a deeper level, is it even desirable to describe "equally and objectively" the horns of a dilemma which some society views "unequally"? That is, if a society at some point in time has balanced a given dilemma nearer one end of the continuum (say "3" on a nine point scale), is it not likely that the schools in that society will

reflect that same value in the organizational dilemma that is counterpart to the wider societal value? If so, is a "neutral" description of that dilemma itself "biased" because it does not accurately reflect the values of the wider society at that point in time? Such questions will not be easily resolved.

Finally, how much effect on the pattern of dilemmas in a school can a program of planned improvement have? Figure 6, above, illustrated a situation in which a school changed dramatically because of a tragic accident. Do similar changes come about with the replacement of key personnel--the principal, for instance? How rapidly can planned change bring about of a new accommodation of the tensions that represent school life. Does planned change bring about latent, unintended, or negative effects (Campbell, 1982)? And if so, will any new pattern of dilemma resolution reflect these latent effects as well as the intended ones? By definition, the theory should account for such eventualities, but all such factors represent empirical issues to consider.

Utility of the Theory

The decision band theory developed in this paper has potential to increase our understanding of how schools work, change, and become more or less effective, all within the context of a realistic sense of the inherent tensions and role strains that constitute school behavior. In particular, the theory permits an increased understanding of the forces that act to make all schools "feel" like schools, yet somehow allow each

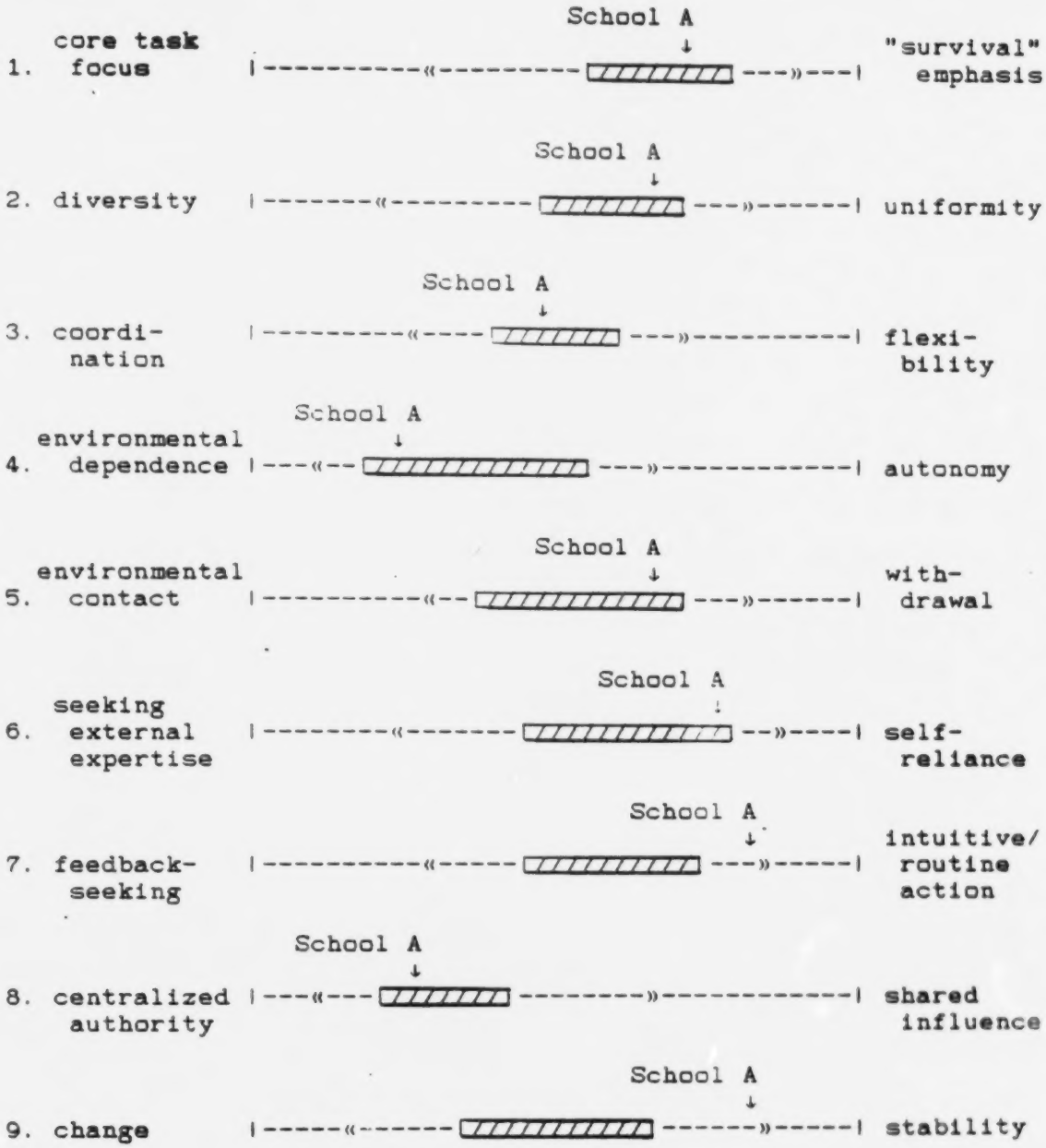
individual school to maintain a unique personality or climate of its own. So too does the model address the need for making explicit how the dilemma resolution process occurs. Since, as Miles notes, this "just happens," it is not typically a considered deliberation.

In addition, the theory as developed could be subjected to empirical verification and as such could be a useful addition to our knowledge of both school and organizational effectiveness. This last point could perhaps be expanded to other dilemmas besides the basic organizational tensions presented by Miles; perhaps more accurately, the "new" dilemmas are simply the same basic dilemmas appearing in different guise as times and situations change (cf. Ruscoe & Miller, 1989). If social life is inherently dynamic and consists in large part of balancing both unconscious and actively conflicting tensions, then as specific instances of the basic organizational dilemmas are resolved, educators will face new ones consistent with the ever-changing environment.

Finally, since the current political economy is subject to the fluctuations of the post industrial shift, environmental flux seems likely to accelerate. Faced with such a condition it seems appropriate to ask whether we want to drift through this period willy-nilly, subject to the vagaries of change and the whims of reactive response to crisis? Or do we want to take a considered course, weighing choices guided by a vision of what the future can and will be? Given the track record of American education,

this is not a glib question. Our obvious shortcomings in this area suggest the need for better theoretical and day to day understanding of organizational dilemmas. If better educational outcomes are to be realized (e.g., greater equity, higher literacy and numeracy), then educators and policymakers will need to focus explicitly on the value choices that frame the dilemmas of everyday school life.

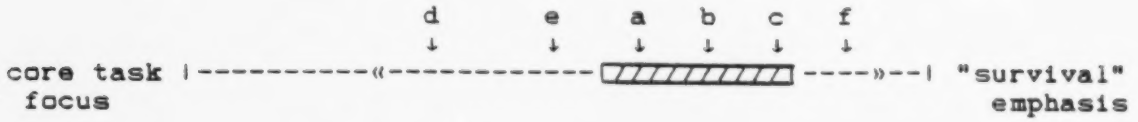
Figure 1. Decision band theory based on organizational dilemmas.



«---» limits on empirical range of behavior exhibited by schools as a response to the received environmental pressures of a given dilemma.

▨ typical pattern of responses exhibited across schools reflecting the power of perceived limits on choices inherent in the resolution of a given dilemma.

Figure 2. Hypothetical range of school responses to the environmental pressures inherent in Dilemma 1.



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1. |---| represents the theoretical limit for behavior consistent with the ends of the stated dilemma. It would be extremely unlikely that any school or district would ever extend completely to either end of the continuum. Survival of the organization requires satisfying both horns of the dilemma, balancing the opposing goods as perceived by the school or district at any particular time.

2. «---» represents the actual empirical limits of behavior for schools and districts situated in the environment of American schooling in the late 20th century.

3. ▨ the "patterned resolution of dilemmas" (Miles, 1981, p. 54) across schools, representing the modal response of schools' perceptions of the actual environmental forces. The received environmental forces stem from the interaction of schools' common properties, primary organizational tasks, and unique local conditions.

4. a,b,c represent three separate schools' specific resolutions to the dilemma, consistent with note 3, all within the modal or expected pattern.

5. d,e,f represent three separate schools' specific resolutions to the dilemma, bounded by the limits in note 2 but outside the typical school response described in note 3. In statistical terms, these schools would be "outliers," falling outside expected behavioral patterns; such schools would be exceptions by definition.

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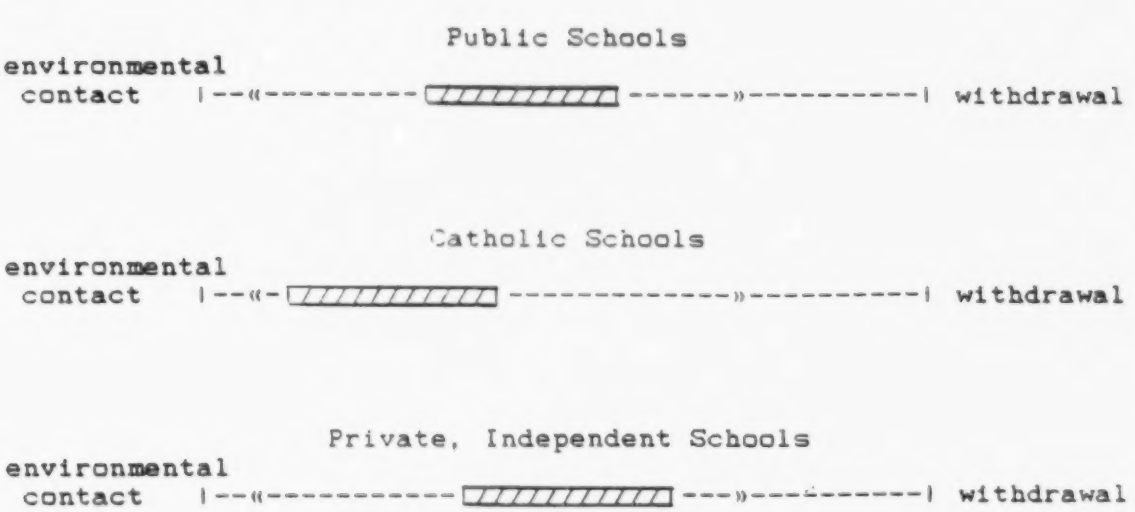
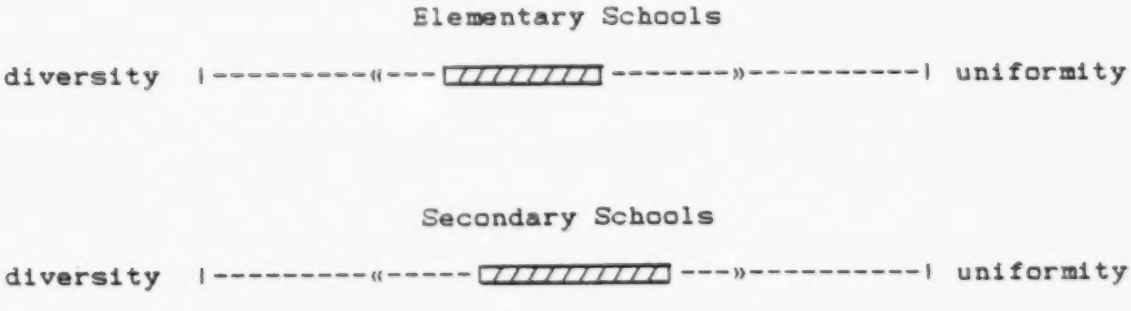
Figure 3. Comparative effects of different governance structures on Dilemma 5.*



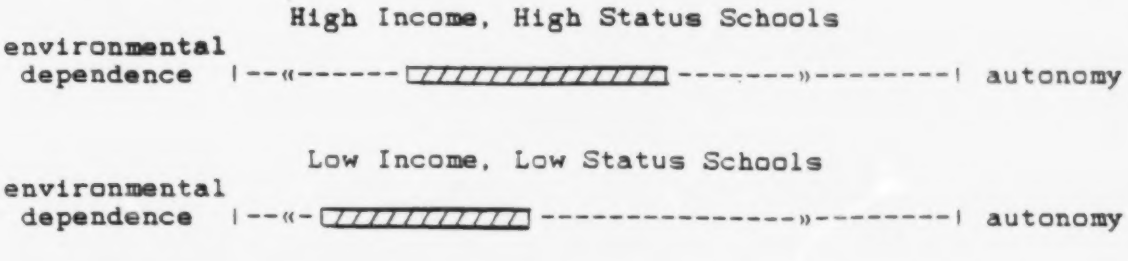
* see legend in Figure 1.

Figure 4. Comparative effects across grade levels on Dilemma 2.*



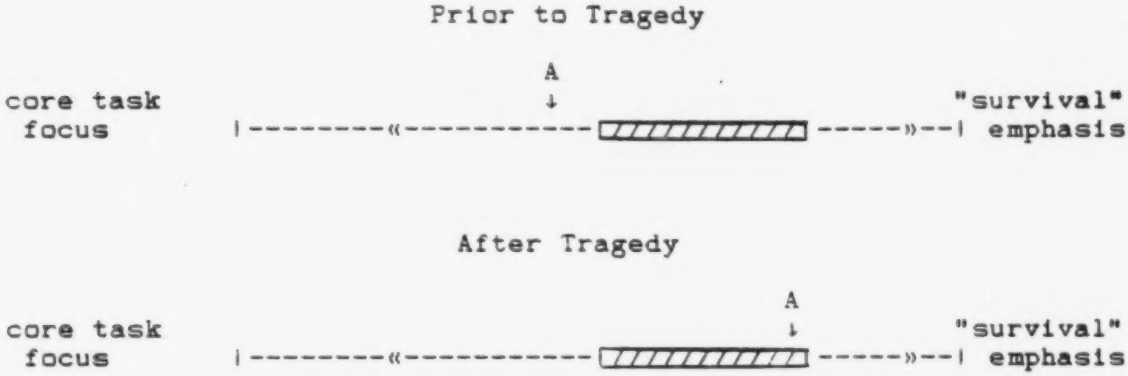
* see legend in Figure 1.

Figure 5. Comparative effects of different socioeconomic conditions on Dilemma 4.*



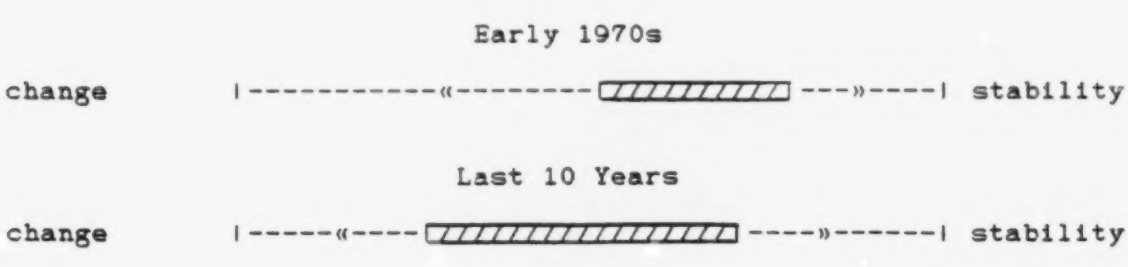
* see legend in Figure 1.

Figure 6. Resolution of Dilemma 1 by school A before and after a community tragedy.*



* see legend in Figure 1.

Figure 7. Effects of environmental change over time on Dilemma 9.*



* see legend in Figure 1.

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